

THOU SHALT NOT SKIM FLAVOR FROM THE HOLIDAYS

By Craig Wilson, USA TODAY I hate this time of year. Not for its crass commercialism and forced frivolity, but because it's the season when the food police come out with their wagging fingers and annual tips on how to get through the holidays without gaining 10 pounds. You can't pick up a magazine without finding a list of holiday eating do's and don'ts. Eliminate second helpings, high-calorie sauces and cookies made with butter, they say. Fill up on vegetable sticks, they say. Good grief. Is your favorite childhood memory of Christmas a carrot stick? I didn't think so. Isn't mine, either. A carrot was something you left for Rudolph. I have my own list of tips for holiday eating. I assure you, if you follow them, you'll be fat and happy. So what if you don't make it to New Year's? Your pants won't fit anymore, anyway.

1. About those carrot sticks. Avoid them. Anyone who puts carrots on a holiday buffet table knows nothing of the Christmas spirit. In fact, if you see carrots, leave immediately. Go next door, where they're serving rum balls.

2. Drink as much eggnog as you can. And quickly. Like fine single-malt scotch, it's rare. In fact, it's even rarer than single-malt scotch. You can't find it any other time of year but now. So drink up! Who cares that it has 10,000 calories in every sip? It's not as if you're going to turn into an eggnogaholic or something. It's a treat. Enjoy it. Have one for me.
Have two. It's later than you think. It's Christmas!

3. If something comes with gravy, use it. That's the whole point of gravy.
Pour it on. Make a volcano out of your mashed potatoes. Fill it with gravy.
Eat the volcano. Repeat. As for mashed potatoes, always ask if they're made with skim milk or whole milk. If it's skim, pass. Why bother? It's like buying a sports car with an automatic transmission.

4. Do not have a snack before going to a party in an effort to control your eating. The whole point of going to a Christmas party is to eat other people's food for free. Lots of it. Hello? Remember college?

5. Under no circumstances should you exercise between now and New Year's.
You can do that in January when
you have nothing else to do. This is the time for long naps, which you'll need after circling the buffet table while carrying a 10-pound plate of food and that vat of eggnog.

6. If you come across something really good at a buffet table, like frosted Christmas cookies in the shape and size of Santa, position yourself near them and don't budge. Have as many as you can before becoming the center of attention. They're like a beautiful pair of shoes. You can't leave them behind. You're not going to see them again.

7. Same for pies. Apple. Pumpkin. Mincemeat. Have a slice of each. Or, if you don't like mincemeat, have two apples and one pumpkin. Always have three. When else do you get to have more than one dessert? Labor Day?

8. Did someone mention fruitcake? Granted, it's loaded with the mandatory celebratory calories, but avoid it at all cost. I mean, have some standards, mate!

9. And one final tip: If you don't feel terrible when you leave the party or get up from the table, you haven't been paying attention. Reread tips.
Start over. But hurry! Cookieless January is just around the corner.